

## 3.7 RECREATION AND PUBLIC USE



This section describes the numerous recreation and public use activities and opportunities currently available at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Primary recreation and public use activities include environmental education and interpretation programs, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, nature photography, and hiking.

The following text was developed through a review of literature, relevant websites, program information, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Program History and Overview (Appendix E), maps, and Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and Foundation staff information.

### 3.7.1 HISTORY OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE IN THE YOLO BYPASS WILDLIFE AREA

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area was created through a broad coalition of conservationists, hunters, farmers, business people, elected officials, and local, state, and federal agencies. Work to establish the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area began in 1989, over 8 years prior to its opening to the public in 1997. Since the inception of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, 24,000 students have participated in the Discover the Flyway program and tens of thousands of visitors from throughout the region have used the area for hunting, fishing, walking, hiking, wildlife viewing, nature photography, and a broad range of environmental education activities for all ages of students, as well as for teachers and the general public. A trail and road network present in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area supports these activities.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is increasingly recognized as a national model for sound ecologically-based integrated resource management and exemplary partnership among many agencies and stakeholders. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is managed by the DFG with education programs and public outreach provided by the Foundation. This mutually beneficial partnership was memorialized in June of 1997 when the Foundation and DFG signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DFG recognizing their long-term partnership to provide public outreach and educational programs. The MOU allows the Foundation to use DFG facilities for office space and as a base for programs related to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (California Department of Fish and Game 1997). A copy of this MOU is provided in Appendix D.

### 3.7.2 EXISTING PUBLIC USE ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Public access and use of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is an important aspect of its continued success. Visitors come to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area with expectations of a certain quality and type of experience that are to be met by use of the public lands, waters, and other facilities. It is the scenic beauty and the abundant presence of wildlife that provide visitors with a high quality, natural outdoor experience. This opportunity is even more valuable, given the proximity of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to the greater Sacramento urban area, providing urban residents with a nearby opportunity to escape urban life and experience a connection with nature, while enjoying first class wildlife viewing opportunities and gaining an understanding of compatible farming and floodway management.

## EXISTING FACILITIES

Based on an evaluation of appropriate and compatible uses, DFG has designated different units within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area for various public use activities (see Chapter 4, “Compatible Resource Management and Public Uses,” for additional detail). Exhibits 3.7-1 and 3.7-2 illustrate the main publicly accessible land areas and facilities. Some lands within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are available and open for activities conducted on foot, such as hunting and wildlife viewing. No overnight camping is allowed within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Some lands are designated as wildlife sanctuaries and are completely closed to the public. Flood protection is the primary purpose of the Yolo Bypass and all interior lands (i.e., inside SRFCP levees) are closed during flooding (e.g., during Fremont Weir overtopping and/or west side tributary flooding and/or when access roads are impassable).

## BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES FOR PUBLIC USE PROGRAMS

### Headquarters



The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is currently administered from the DFG headquarters complex at 45211 County Road 32B (aka Chiles Road) one mile west of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. This complex includes a 3-acre demonstration wetland, a residence, maintenance shop, conference room, and office space for employees of both the DFG and Foundation. The headquarters building conference room serves as a popular place for meetings and workshops for resource agencies. During the winter the room it is used as an activity and lunch room for Discover the Flyway students. It also serves that purpose for special activities such as Marsh Madness and Nature Bowl. The porch surrounding the headquarters building provides cover for activity stations, lunch and for greeting field trip participants.

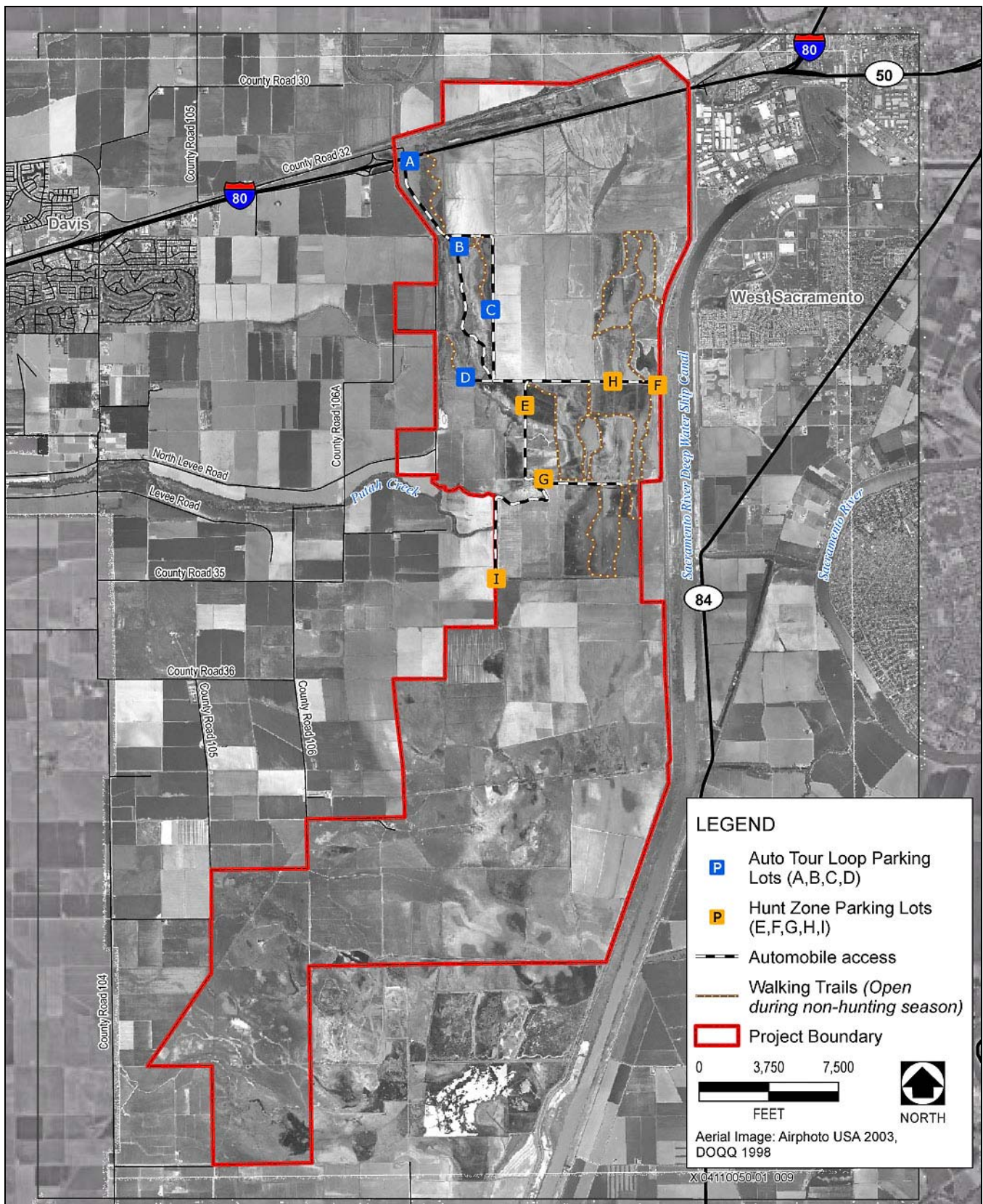
The headquarters entry way provides a small area for brochures and other program information. It is also used for interpretive displays such as mounted Tule elk antlers, waterfowl suspended from the ceiling and a display case with historic decoys, an insect collection and other wildlife artifacts. The California native landscaping surrounding the building also serves an educational purpose.



The Foundation is headquartered in a 40' by 20' modular office unit behind the DFG Headquarters office. The Foundation program office is located in the headquarters building. The administrative and management staff works in the office unit. Three sheds provide space for storage of educational materials and miscellaneous supplies.

### The Yolo Demonstration Wetlands

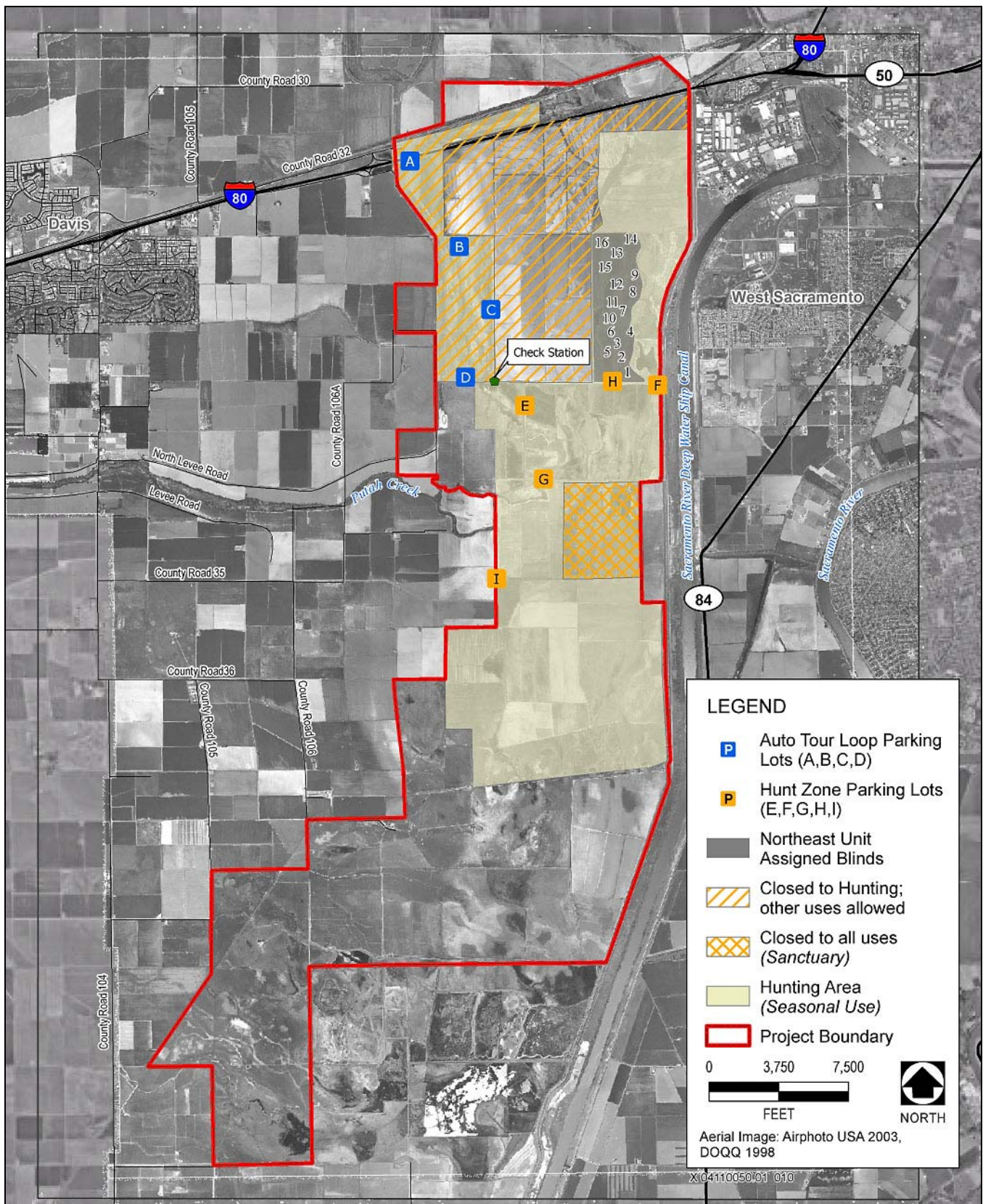
The 3-acre demonstration area was restored from a fallow farm field to a microcosm of Central Valley wetland habitats in the summer of 1998. The land was graded by a volunteer tractor operator, trees were donated by the USACE, and the



Source: Adapted by EDAW 2007

### Current Public Use Map of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (2006)

**Exhibit 3.7-1**

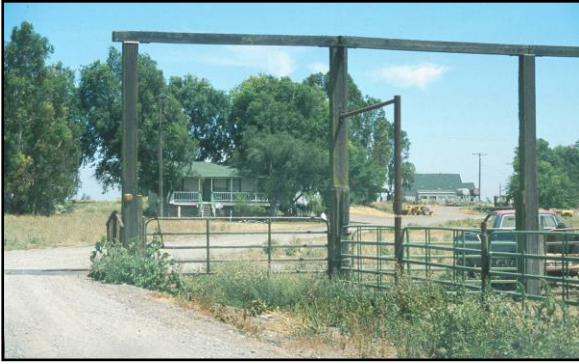


Source: Adapted by EDAW 2007

## Hunting Map of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (2006)

Exhibit 3.7-2

water system materials were provided by DFG. The installation of the irrigation system was completed by Yolo Basin and DFG staff and a group of boy scouts as an Eagle Scout project. The habitats represented include a seasonal wetland, permanent wetland, willow thicket, riparian forest, native grassland and oak woodland. In 1999 the Foundation and DFG completed a nature trail with a series of five signs interpreting the habitats and the goals of restoration. A Davis area Rotary Club donated an information kiosk located on the edge of the demonstration area. There are two field guides to the plants and animals of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area that can be used on a walk through the area. The success of this habitat project is reflected in the fact that over 100 species of birds have been observed on site.



### **Tule Ranch Headquarters**

In addition to two residences, the Tule Ranch Headquarters also includes a complex of corrals used to process livestock. Also found on the Tule Ranch Unit is a large barn thought to have been constructed in the 1930's. This barn known locally as the Umbrella barn may be used as an educational facility for the interpretation of the adjacent vernal pools in the future. The ranch headquarters may also serve as an interpretive facility that will allow students to experience the role agriculture has played in the Yolo Basin.

### **Hunter Check Station**

A mobile hunter check station is operated at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area during the autumn and winter hunting season. The check station opens at least two hours before sunrise and provides a base from which to manage the daily hunting activity. Permits are sold and information about the hunting program is exchanged with the public. Currently, a trailer is transported and placed at the southern end of the auto tour route. This trailer is removed at the onset of winter flooding.



### **Pacific Flyway Center (Proposed Facility)**

The proposed Pacific Flyway Center to be constructed on the 69-acre Pacific Flyway Center unit just outside the bypass levee would include visitor parking, exhibit areas, and multi-use meeting spaces for a variety of educational opportunities for school children and visitors from throughout the community and region. Public exhibit areas would depict the natural history of the Yolo Basin and its place in the Pacific Flyway, as well as interpretation of the role of agriculture and

flood protection in habitat creation and resource conservation. In June 2006, about 45 acres of the site were restored to representative Central Valley habitats including seasonal and permanent wetlands, riparian forest, and uplands. This complex will serve as demonstration wetlands to educate visitors about the managed and natural habitats found throughout the Wildlife Area with the added benefit that it is located outside the Bypass and not subject to flooding. A 250-foot border surrounds one half of the site to provide demonstration farm fields and an agricultural buffer between the site and adjacent field. There is a three-bedroom residence on this property.

### **Roads and Parking**

Eight miles of gravel roads are currently available for public use. Nine parking lots are located along various parts of the roads and several of the parking areas provide access to the hiking trails and hunting sites at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (Exhibits 3.7-1 and 3.7-2). The roads also allow access through the auto tour route to observe the many types of wildlife attracted to this area.

## Trails

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area provides approximately 16 miles of unpaved, improved trails for walking and hiking and are mostly used by visitors participating in other primary activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, or participating in scheduled programs. Trail locations can be seen on Exhibit 3.7-1. Certain areas are closed to non-hunters during hunting season on open hunting days (Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday). Trails restricted during the hunting season are all within the designated hunting area and are illustrated on Exhibit 3.7-2. Currently, the only trails and/or roads open to bicycle use are located in the Causeway Unit (See also Chapter 4, “Compatible Resource Management and Public Use”). Additionally, bicycle use in the hunting area is allowed for hunting access purposes. There are currently no trails open for equestrian use.

## Signs

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area uses four categories of signage to regulate public use and access. These categories include directional, regulatory, informational, and interpretive signs. Some directional signs are located at various intersections inside the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to help visitors navigate within the area. Regulatory signs at parking lots inform visitors of allowable activities and restrictions within the respective areas. Signs such as the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area nameplate adjacent to I-80 inform visitors of the existence of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and to acknowledge the many agencies and organizations that worked to create and formalize the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Interpretive signs/kiosks are located at the DFG Headquarters site and include interpretation of Central Valley habitats and the Yolo Demonstration Wetlands. An additional sign is located at the entrance to the existing auto route and serves as a place to post a map of publicly accessible roads and paths, DFG regulations, and notes regarding upcoming events.

## EXISTING RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES



This section provides a description of the various recreational and educational activities currently available at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a unique example of a place where these activities can co-exist with carefully managed multiple land use objectives such as agriculture, flood control, and habitat for native species.

### Hunting

Hunting is one of the main forms of recreation currently available within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Waterfowl and pheasant hunting are the most popular, however, visitors also participate in hunting of other upland game species including dove. See Exhibit 3.7-2 for a map of designated hunting areas throughout the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

September 1 is the traditional beginning of the hunting season and is the opening day of the dove season. This is typically a very busy hunt day at the Wildlife Area. Waterfowl season usually opens in mid October and runs until the end of January or early February. At the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, the hunting season often ends or is interrupted by seasonal flooding of the Yolo Bypass.

Table 3.7-1 below lists the game species hunted at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area along with hunting seasons, required permits, licenses, stamps and tags.

**Table 3.7-1  
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Hunting Seasons**

Species	Days <sup>1</sup>	Required Licenses
Waterfowl, coots, moorhens and snipe	Saturdays, Sundays & Wednesdays	Resident hunting license and daily permit Federal Duck Stamp State Duck Stamp
Pheasant	First 9 days of season and then Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays	Resident hunting license and daily permit Upland Game Stamp Daily permit
Dove	Daily during September and only waterfowl and pheasant hunt days during the late dove season	Resident hunting license Upland Game Stamp and daily permit

1 Closed Christmas Day when falls on Saturday, Sunday, or Wednesday hunt day

Source: California Department of Fish and Game 2002a, 2002b, 2002c

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area currently maintains 16 duck blinds and one fully accessible blind on the approximate 3,000 acres available for waterfowl hunting. DFG currently allows 40 hunters to roam free plus up to 16 parties in designated blinds on any given hunting day. With the recent acquisition of additional lands, the Wildlife Area will someday have a capacity of over 200 hunters with 38 acres per hunter, at any one time to ensure a safe and positive hunting experience.

Pheasant hunting is currently allowed on approximately 5,000 acres of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Five designated parking lots are available for use by hunters. Hunters are allowed to use shotguns and archery for hunting. They may also use dogs to assist in hunting. Steel shot is required for waterfowl, coot and moorhen hunting. Lead shot is allowed for pheasant, dove and snipe. In 2005 DFG issued 3,066 hunting permits to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. A hunter check-in station is operated by DFG during the autumn and winter hunting season. Hunting results from the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are summarized in Table 3.7-2 below.

**Table 3.7-2  
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Hunting Results (1997-98 through 2005-06)**

Year	Total Hunters	Junior Hunters	Ducks Killed	Geese Killed	Pheasants Killed	Total Waterfowl Killed
1997-98	575	36	767	19	19	786
1998-99	1,297	76	1,380	16	43	1,396
1999-00	1,939	123	1,980	56	53	2,036
2000-01	2,198	161	1,988	66	91	2,054
2001-02	2,096	148	2,081	21	176	2,102
2002-03	1,371	70	882	8	271	890
2003-04	3,280	256	3,799	117	606	3,916
2004-05	3,819	244	4,971	199	189	5,170
2005-06	3,066	157	3,147	113	267	3,037

Source: DFG 2006

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area also hosts junior pheasant hunts and post season youth waterfowl hunt days (i.e., junior waterfowl hunts). Generally, there are 3 junior hunting days each year. All junior hunters must have successfully completed a hunter education course, possess a valid Resident Junior Hunting License, and be 15 years of age or younger. State and federal duck stamps are not required.

## Fishing

Fishing is also popular and several opportunities are provided within the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Primary game species present include sturgeon, catfish, black bass, and striped bass. Primary fishing locations include the East Toe Drain and along Putah Creek near the Los Rios Check Dam. Access can be obtained through parking Lot F (Toe Drain) and Lot G (Putah Creek). The East Toe Drain can also be reached from outside the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area on the West Sacramento (east) side of the drain, although this area is not in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Sturgeon and striped bass are both anadromous fish (i.e., fish that spend all or part of their adult life in salt water and return to freshwater streams and rivers to spawn) that can be caught in the Toe Drain during their upstream migration from San Francisco Bay. Adult sturgeon are generally in the rivers throughout the winter months and adult striped bass are typically present in April and May. All of the game fish species present in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area offer great recreational opportunities. Valid California Fishing Licenses are required at all times.



## Wildlife Viewing

Many species of birds and mammals may be observed in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Visitors may see a multitude of birds of prey, shorebirds, waterfowl and other migratory birds with over 200 known species having been identified within the area. Typical species include ibis, pelicans, cormorants, great blue herons, orioles, blue grosbeaks, and western kingbirds. The innovative shorebird management strategies implemented at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area have made the Wildlife Area a key shorebird viewing area in the Central Valley, attracting birdwatchers from throughout northern California. Mammals

that can be seen in the area include coyotes, raccoons, gray fox, mule deer, beaver, mink, and river otters. The extensive water system maintained on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area also harbors large numbers of fish, amphibians, and invertebrates.

Public wildlife viewing is currently allowed year round along the existing auto tour route and along existing open trails as well as through scheduled tours and educational programs. Wildlife viewing is also permitted within designated hunting areas during non-hunting seasons. Flooding in the Yolo Bypass closes all public use. See Exhibit 3.7-1 for location of existing open trails.



## Environmental Education and Interpretive Programs

Getting people in the outdoors is at the heart of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area's mission. The Foundation and DFG collaborate in managing and staffing a wide variety of environmental education and interpretation programs including the Discover the Flyway program for schools, Marsh Madness Youth Days, Nature Bowl, public tours, docent program, Flyway Nights lecture series, California Duck Days, Project Wet, and other workshops. Yolo Basin Foundation is the primary organization for developing, establishing, staffing and acquiring funding for Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area's



education and interpretation programs. DFG provides facilities, staff support, and expertise in its shared role with the Foundation.

### **Yolo Basin Foundation**

The Foundation is a community-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the appreciation and stewardship of wetlands and wildlife through education and innovative partnerships. It was founded in 1990 to lead the effort to establish the 3,700-acre Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

One of the principal goals of the Foundation is the facilitation of environmental education with the Discover the Flyway school program. Foundation staff, DFG staff, interns and volunteers assist students, teachers and parents with hands on learning activities in the Demonstration Wetlands and lead exploratory walks on the Wildlife Area.

The Foundation is the sponsoring non-profit organization for California Duck Days, publishes the Yolo Flyway Newsletter, brings wetland education to classrooms with “Wild about Wetlands” learning kits, introduces the public to natural places in the community through public field trips, and hosts the popular Flyway Nights speaker series. The Foundation also hosts and facilitates the Yolo Bypass Working Group, which provides an opportunity for farmers, landowners and agencies with interests in the Yolo Bypass to discuss Bypass related issues as well as provide guidance and opinions on such issues.

Staffing is the largest expense associated with Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area programs. Seven part-time employees provide the wide array of programs available. The staff positions include an executive director, associate executive director, development director, program coordinator, office manager and two education associates. There is a part time volunteer coordinator who is funded through both DFG and the Foundation. During the school year there are usually a few interns from UC Davis or other area colleges assisting as well.

Funding for Foundation programs is provided through individual and business memberships as well as by a wide variety of private sector sponsors including CWA, Davis Sunrise Rotary Club, Dean Witter Foundation, Environmental Law Section of the Sacramento Bar Association, First Northern Bank, Intel Corporation, Rumsey Community Foundation, NEC Corporation. There are two giving clubs, the Yolo Basin Club and Yolo Flyway Club for donors of \$300 to \$2,500. Bucks for Ducks, a dinner and auction, is the Foundation’s fundraising event held every October since 1991.

Public sector sponsors include USBR, USFWS, U.S. EPA, Central Valley Joint Venture, City of Davis. Yolo Basin Foundation has two service contracts with CBDA, one for the Yolo Bypass Working Group through December 2006 and the Pacific Flyway Center through December 2007. Public funding for educational programs is decreasing in general and the Foundation has had to rely more heavily on the private sector.

The Foundation has received numerous awards for its work in conservation efforts and environmental education, including the California Department of Fish and Game Conservation Award (1994 and 2002), the U.S., Department of Interior Wetlands Conservation Award (1995), Outstanding Implementation Award from the Friends of the San Francisco Estuary (1996), Governor’s Environmental and Economic Leadership Award (2000), City of Davis Environmental Recognition Award (2002), and Western Section of the Wildlife Society Conservationist of the Year Award (2007).



### **Educational Programs**

The Foundation in collaboration with DFG offers a number of informative environmental education programs aimed at training teachers and educating students. The environmental education programs have been developed with the understanding that teachers bear, in large part, the

responsibility of building the foundation that children will need to become well rounded, original thinkers who can make a difference in the world they live in. The programs have been developed in a way that makes it easy for teachers to incorporate them into their school curriculum.

The Foundation's environmental education program seeks to foster:

- ▶ **Awareness:** to help people acquire an awareness and sensitivity to the natural environment and the interactions, which occur in the Wildlife Area.
- ▶ **Knowledge:** to provide a variety of experiences in and acquire a basic understanding of the environment in the Wildlife Area, including how it functions, how it is managed, and what plants and animals live there.
- ▶ **Attitude:** to help students understand the value of the natural environment and to motivate them to actively participate in environmental improvement and protection; to see positive examples of how wildlife habitat can coexist with flood control, agriculture and the surrounding urban area.
- ▶ **Skills:** to help acquire the tools for identifying, understanding, and solving environmental problems.
- ▶ **Participation:** to provide an opportunity to be involved with Wildlife Area restoration activities, and with the resolution of environmental problems in the community.
- ▶ **Impact:** to provide a format for the public to enjoy the Wildlife Area with minimal impact on its wildlife.

The Foundation, in close cooperation with DFG has developed a document (Appendix E), which provides an overview of public use programs, site history, and a description of interpretive resources (Yolo Basin Foundation and California Department of Fish and Game 2007).

### Discover the Flyway School Program

The Discover the Flyway school program is an education and outreach program that includes teacher workshops, a curriculum guide, classroom field trips, the Wild About Wetlands classroom kits, and volunteer training sessions. The program focuses on hands-on, interactive learning experiences for K–12 students that create a connection between ecological processes and the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

The Foundation trains hundreds of teachers and hosts over 4,000 students and parents annually from Sacramento, Yolo, Solano, El Dorado, and Placer Counties. There are over 60 participating schools from 15 school districts and numerous private schools. The program operates four days a week during the school year and includes structured small group activities at the Demonstration Wetlands as well as tours of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.

In the past few years the Foundation has put considerable effort into recruiting classroom teachers from underserved schools. These schools are identified as Title I schools based on participation in the state-wide school free breakfast and lunch program. These schools often lack the resources for field trip transportation. The Foundation has found corporation and foundation sponsors to cover the expenses associated with the extra outreach. These sponsorship funds are also used to maintain a bus fund to cover the bus costs that enables students to attend a field trip.

Program activities correlate to the California State standards for science or social studies enabling teachers to incorporate a field trip to the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area into their daily curriculum. Before bringing students on a Discover the Flyway field trip, teachers attend a required one time only Discover the Flyway Workshop, where they are given the materials and instruction needed for a successful and education packed field trip experience tailored to their grade level. All field trips are facilitated and directed by highly trained Foundation staff, interns,

and volunteers. A four-dollar per student donation to assist with program expenses is requested. However, if students cannot afford this or teachers are unable to collect the full amount the class is still welcome to participate. No one is prevented from participating due to cost.

### Discover the Flyway Teacher Workshops

The Discover the Flyway one-day teacher workshops are geared for teachers in grades K–12 who are interested in providing a learning resource for their students that aids in an understanding and appreciation of the natural world in their community. The workshops familiarize teachers with various wetland habitats in the context of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and provide suggestions and lessons for hands-on learning activities. Teachers are given a handbook with curriculum related activities that includes activity themes, background information, and instructions.

In the summer of 2005 teachers were introduced to the Foundation’s new curriculum with third through fifth grade units: “Living with Water, the Story of Yolo Basin and its People” The third grade curriculum, Patwin Life: A Circle of Seasons was successfully implemented in the 2005–2006 school year. Teacher workshops for 2006 will include introduction of the fourth grade agriculture oriented curriculum, “Yolo Basin: Feeding the People.”

### Discover the Flyway Class Field Trips

After completion of the workshop the Foundation offers teachers staff support and use of field equipment for classroom field trips. Teachers are then encouraged to schedule a field trip to bring their students to the Wildlife Area with active support by Foundation staff and volunteers. After scheduling a trip teachers work with Foundation staff to select 3 to 4 grade level appropriate field activities to be done by the students under guidance of a trained volunteer, when they arrive at the Yolo Demonstration Wetlands. After an orientation by a Foundation staff person and completion of the 3 to 4 activities, the students eat lunch and then head out for an hour or two of exploring in a wild setting at the Wildlife Area.

Wild About Wetlands classroom kits are another resource available to teachers. The kits hold full instructions and materials for numerous wetlands related activities that are geared toward preparing students for a trip to the Wildlife Area. They can be checked out by teachers who participate in a Discover the Flyway Workshop. California Waterfowl Association (CWA) has assisted the Foundation with maintenance and distribution of the kits for many years.



### Marsh Madness

The Foundation and the CWA co-host Marsh Madness Youth Days at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area several times a year. This program targets underserved elementary schools with limited resources in both metropolitan and rural areas.

CWA provides volunteers, equipment, lunch, and plans the activities. The Foundation provides the school outreach and bus transportation. DFG provides the facility and helps with set up. Each Marsh Madness Day brings 60 students to the Wildlife Area to spend the day learning about wetlands,

wildlife, and conservation. The students receive small group instruction and hands-on experience identifying birds, searching for signs of animal life, examining pond water, studying wetland plants, and much more. Their day includes discussions about conservation, hunting, and other outdoor issues. Everyone is treated to a lunch buffet including foods from wetlands such as rice, cranberries, duck, elk and tule roots.

## Nature Bowl

Nature Bowl is a cooperative team competition for 3rd through 6th grade students sponsored by the DFG, California State University Sacramento, American River Natural History Association, American River Nature Center, Effie Yeaw Nature Center, Placer Nature Center, Sacramento Zoo, and the Foundation. This engaging event introduces students to environmental issues, reinforces key concepts, increases critical thinking skills, and encourages student involvement in community conservation efforts. Students take part in fun activities such as Nature Investigations, Nature Relay, Team Problems, Bell-Ringers, Enviro-mercials and Nature Games. Questions and activities focus on local and regional environmental science and issues, and correlate with the science content standards. The Nature Bowl serves as a model for teachers to use in their environmental education instruction. Teams can be coached by teachers, parents, youth leaders, or high school students. DFG and the Foundation provide some guidance to team coaches during the months that teams prepare for the event. DFG and the Foundation host the Nature Bowl semi-finals each March at the Wildlife Area Headquarters.



## Volunteers

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area volunteers have the unique opportunity to participate in specialized trainings as well as go on informative field trips both at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and surrounding areas. Volunteers work within the Foundation programs and are all also signed up as DFG volunteers. Introductory workshops for volunteers are held throughout the year as needed. Volunteers serve in a variety of positions as described below:

### Flyway Assistants

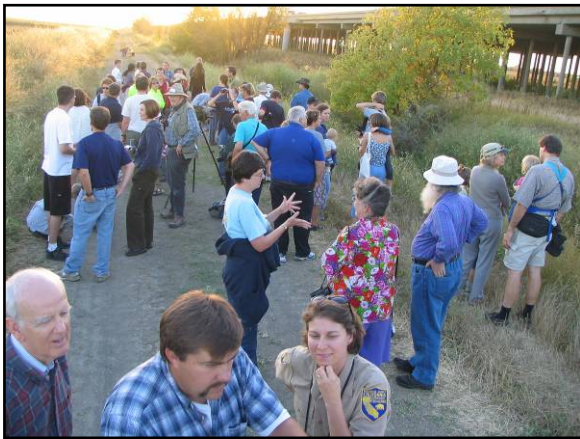
Flyway Assistants assist with Discover the Flyway field trips. They lead learning stations at the Demonstration Wetlands, assist with field equipment, help develop program tools, and join with staff to lead Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area walks.

### Field Trip Ambassadors

Field Trip Ambassadors accompany the local wildlife and habitat experts who serve as volunteer leaders for public tours of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and quickly become experts themselves on local birds and the natural history of this unique and multi-functional ecosystem. They are available to assist the leader, give beginners individual guidance and also promote the Foundation's role by providing a brief introduction to the organization as well as by providing membership sign up sheets, newsletters and program flyers to tour participants.

### Special Events/Administration

Throughout the year, the Foundation organizes special events such as California Duck Days, and participates in community events. Volunteers are the number one resource for making these events a success. Special Events/Administration volunteers are often involved with large mailings, event set-up, fund-raising assistance, as well as interpretive display staffing. Volunteers also assist Foundation staff with various administrative tasks in the office.



### **Public Outreach**

Public outreach events include monthly tours of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, bat viewing tours, vernal pool tours, Flyway Nights lectures and California *Duck Days*, an annual celebration and awareness-raising event that has been held at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area since 2003. The Yolo Flyway is a newsletter that is published three times a year with educational articles, updates on activities, and a schedule of upcoming activities. The Foundation also hosts and facilitates Yolo Bypass Working Group meetings as a forum for stakeholder and public discussion of Yolo Bypass issues.

### **Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Tours**

Public tours of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are offered on the second Saturday of each month from September through June. Tours meet at parking lot A in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, focus on a variety of specialty topics, and are led by experienced naturalists, often associated with Yolo Audubon Society. DFG staff also lead trips. The tours provide opportunities to view the abundant wildlife that inhabit the seasonal and permanent wetlands, riparian areas, and uplands present in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area throughout the year. Depending on the season, migrating and resident waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, raptors, and wading birds may also be viewed. These tours are open to anyone, are always advertised in the local media and are a good introduction to the Wildlife Area. They are geared toward any level of bird watcher or nature enthusiast.

### **Vernal Pool Open House**

The vernal pool open house is co-sponsored by DFG and the Foundation and provides an opportunity for the public to visit the unique vernal pools at the Tule Ranch in the southern part of the Wildlife Area. The vernal pool open house typically takes place in April during the peak of the wildflower viewing season, and trips are led by volunteers, often associated with the Jepson Prairie Docent Program. Training to become a Jepson Prairie docent is very applicable to the Wildlife Area's vernal pool program and is made available to all volunteers.

### **Bat Tours**

Bat tours are offered six to seven times during the spring and summer months and are co-sponsored by the California Native Bat Conservancy. Bat tours offer a presentation on the benefits and wonders of bats followed by a guided tour, just before sunset, into the Wildlife Area. During the tour, participants have the opportunity to view what is perhaps the largest colony of Mexican free-tailed bats in California emerge from their roosting area on the underside of the Yolo Causeway bridge. In the spring and summer of 2005, between fifty and one hundred people attended each trip.



### **Flyway Nights Lecture Series**

The Flyway Nights Lecture Series takes place at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Headquarters Building. On the first Wednesday of each month from November through April at 7 p.m. the general public is invited to Foundation sponsored lectures presented by local and regional experts. Topics are generally wetland related and feature local issues relating to wetlands and wildlife. The program has included experts on snakes and amphibians, mammals, hawks, rice growing, local geology, butterflies, and dragonflies. There is usually a full house present on these evenings.



## **California Duck Days**

California Duck Days is a wetland festival hosted at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area with the mission to educate and inspire the public about wetlands and wildlife of the Central Valley in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. The event is a partnership of regional organizations and agencies (including the Foundation, Yolo Audubon, CWA, City of Davis, and Yolo County RCD) and has been held annually since 1994. The event includes an evening reception, field trips, workshops, exhibits, and a show of wetland related artwork by area high school students. Duck Days is a family friendly event that attracts visitors from throughout the region and out of state to learn about and

appreciate the natural environment of the Central Valley. The event also showcases wildlife friendly farming techniques by organizing field trips to area farms. The festival provides a platform for a broad range of diverse conservation perspectives, including farmers, birding enthusiasts, and hunters, and encourages wetland conservation by promoting regional wetland stewardship on public and private land.

## **Yolo Bypass Working Group**

The Foundation initiated the Yolo Bypass Working Group in 1998 under a CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Grant as a communication and educational forum. This ad hoc stakeholder group has been very successful and continues to meet approximately every three months. The 37<sup>th</sup> meeting was held in June 2006. Over 30 people representing a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in the Yolo Bypass regularly attend these meetings. Participants include landowners (farmers, ranchers, duck hunters), DWR, State Reclamation Board, DFG, USFWS, State Department of Food and Agriculture, NRCS, Dixon and Yolo RCDs, SAFCA, Yolo County, City of West Sacramento, CWA, DU, NMFS, National Weather Service, SYMVCD, Port of Sacramento, and others. DFG and the Foundation host the meetings at the Wildlife Area headquarters conference room. Grant funds cover the costs for contracting a facilitator. The presence of the facilitator has created an atmosphere of trust and relaxed exchange of information that has been praised by the stakeholders.

The 2000 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award was presented to the Yolo Basin Foundation in recognition of the Yolo Bypass Working Group for outstanding contributions in the area of environmental restoration and rehabilitation.

In August 2001 the Foundation published a document prepared with Working Group participants entitled: *A Framework for the Future: The Yolo Bypass Management Strategy*. This document can be found on the Yolo Basin Foundation website, [www.yolobasin.org](http://www.yolobasin.org).

Funding to support the Yolo Bypass Working Group beyond the finish of the Calfed grant in December 2006 is being pursued through several grant proposals. It is anticipated that the Working Group will play a key role in the implementation of the Yolo County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan now in the draft stage.

## **The Importance of Public Access in the Future**

Encouraging public access in its many forms will allow generations of Central Valley inhabitants to come to understand the lessons of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area: that wildlife habitat, flood control, agriculture, and urban life can successfully co-exist. In the current planning vocabulary it is a clear, understandable example of this important aspect of creating a sustainable community.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is considered a community treasure as articulated at a recent Yolo County Board of Supervisors meeting. As the human population grows in the coming decades the habitat values and public access opportunities will continue to increase in importance. In the not to distant future the Yolo Bypass Wildlife

Area will become a valued landmark. Increasing numbers of commuters and other travelers crossing the I-80 Causeway will look forward to the glimpse of wildness that the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area gives them. Much like Central Park in New York City and the American River Parkway in Sacramento, the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area will be a treasured community symbol.